

## Making as Place: Mapping Creativity

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Applicable to the thread Post Occupancy Buildings and Cities

I propose that architecture has the potential to create **processes to instigate new social structures**, through an interconnected analysis that reaches beyond architecture's formal programme. I will use my research in Kochi to substantiate this. Kochi is the second most important port city on the western coast of India and is the commercial capital of Kerala, India. The city has a tropical climate with high humidity all year round because of its proximity to the sea and large inland water bodies, or backwaters.

Building on my collaborative work with the Kochi-Muziri Biennale, India, (a public art biennale inaugurated in 2012), my paper **will investigate local resilient practices** to explore the potential of supporting a sustainable practice of creative engagement with place.

My fieldwork focuses on sites in Fort Kochi, and Mattancherry<sup>1</sup>. The sites for the Biennale are housed in this area. I will sample a section of small business, which lie between Bazaar Road, a peripheral road, and Fort Kochi's edge that gives out onto the Arabian Sea. These arterial routes are lined with 'go-downs' storage warehouses, some still operating as storage places others adopted for residential use or manufacturing. Additionally, in Mattancherry, which has a high concentration of Muslims, there are areas with clusters of trades such as recycling of materials and woodworking.

The recent accelerated pace of regeneration in the area, is visible in the physical urban surroundings. My research seeks to explore the socio-economic underpinnings of these small-scale manufacturers, their spatial occupancy and the concrete networks of activities they create.

A section of the businesses falls within the term 'informal sectors', as well as 'family enterprise sectors', which often act rationally through satisfying, rather than profit-maximising behaviour. Proximity to residential areas is key, followed by proximity to customers and then land prices, in influencing business locations. These entrepreneurs prefer to integrate life and work, which influences their locational logic of informal activities.

I will draw out the 'tactics' that the businesses already have in place, a form of reclaiming autonomy against pervasive influences of culture, economics and politics (Certeau 1984).

My fieldwork explores the opportunity **to create an active basis to provide agency around the fragility of this type of occupation** and bring to the fore the assembly of activities, thereby strengthening a platform of sustainable creativity foregrounded by the Biennale's presence.

Certeau, Michel de (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkley, University of California.

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<sup>1</sup> Mattancherry is part of the Ernakulam District in Kerala and was once the most prominent trading zone in Kochi. Goods were delivered by boat to the small landing bays, taken up the streets and delivered to the spice markets and warehouses. Goods were also carried by houseboats, which could transport up to 30 tonnes of stock. The houseboats were able to navigate the complex networks of waterways across the peninsula, which are still in existence although, suffer from pollution. Although Matancherry is still active today the area is in a poor condition and many of the buildings, which once housed businesses, are now derelict or provide slum type housing.